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On the Hindu Custom of Dying to Redress a Grievance.—

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I. THE LAW.

THE mediæval and modern practice of sitting in *dharna*, literally 'holding up' a defaulting debtor by preparing to commit suicide at his door, is familiar to English readers through Maine's account in the *Early History of Institutions*, p. 297 ff. The custom is more fully described by Leist in his *Jus Gentium*, p. 475 ff., a presentation based mainly on Jolly's article, *Das Indische Schuldrecht* (the latter was published in the Sitz. d. phil. hist. Kl. d. Bair. Ak. d. W., 1877). These accounts refer to the legal aspect of suicide as a means of compelling payment,¹ and are based on provisions of the native codes of Manu and Br̥haspati. Manu, circa 300–200 B. C., recognizes several means of getting a debt paid, and among them, viii. 49, is one called *ācarita* or 'the custom,' a word not further defined and in itself as indefinite as if one should say "One may compel payment *à la mode*." Br̥haspati, however, circa 500 A. D., says, xi. 58, that *ācarita* is a mode of exacting payment which consists either in seizing the debtor's wife, son, and cattle, or in "performing the door-sitting", *kṛtvā dvāropaveṣanam*. The puzzling thing about this definition is that it seems to imply suicide, whereas suicide by starvation has already been mentioned in the same author's list as one of the means called 'moral suasion,' (a category which includes also advice, remonstrance, and following about, *anugama*, 53 and 54).

Circa 400 B. C., in the law-book of Āpastamba i. 19. 1, the custom of besieging (a debtor) is recognized in the words "he who has entered upon" (sc. *prāya*, or death by starvation) and "he who is concerned in the sitting" (*pratyupaviṣṭaḥ*, *yaḥ ca pratyupaveṣane*), with a possible connection with the preceding word *ṛṇika*, 'debtor' (p. w.).

¹ The comparative side, treated by Maine and Leist, was first noticed by Stokes, who illustrated the practice again in The Academy, 12 Sept., 1885, p. 169. See also Tamassia, *Riv. scientifica del diritto*, 1897, p. 76 ff.

² The word is not confined to this application since it occurs of libations, offered "as is the custom," *ācaritatvam*, in Pār. Gṛh. Sūt. ii. 17. 18.

According to the later law, the suitor must be a Brahman priest (Jolly, p. 316), though nothing is said on this subject in the codes just cited.

II. ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE LAW.

So much by way of introduction. In the citation of legal works hitherto made by others no illustrations have been given of the ancient practice, but only the formal statutes appertaining to it. In the following pages I give some cases of various forms of suicide for redress from what may be called historical records. I do not mean that the cases are historical in reality, for they are only epic narratives and one of them is a fable. But they are older than the cases in the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, and are in so far historical as to reflect conditions which must have obtained when the two epics were composed. Their value lies in the fact that they represent not merely what is the rule according to the law-book, but what was regarded as customary. Incidentally these epic illustrations will show that *prāya* in the account of *Br̥haspati* cannot be taken in the sense of *prārthanā*, begging or beseeching, as some of the native expositors think (Jolly, p. 314), but is the *prāya* of the regular practice called *prāyopaveśana*, or “entering upon death,” *prāya* being here, as elsewhere, *exitus*, a wider term in this respect than *ācarita* in its meaning of “door-sitting,” the latter, however, not being confined to this, but including any obstruction, as does *dharmā*¹ to-day.

SUICIDE IN GENERAL.

According to Hindu law all forms of suicide are forbidden. Thus in *Manu* v. 89, and *Yājñavalkya* iii. 6, the *ātmatyāgin*, “self-abandoner,” is one to whose spirit no oblations may be offered, or in the still stronger language of *Apastamba*, i. 28. 17, the “one killing himself,” *ātmānam abhimanyamānaḥ*, is accursed, *abhiṣataḥ*, like a murderer. Similarly *Gāutama*, xiv. 12, and *Vasiṣṭha*, xxiii. 14, ff., who mention particularly as suicides thus accursed those who kill themselves by starvation, *prāya* (in its usual meaning, death by fasting), weapons, fire (wood, Vas-

¹ The practice of *dharmā* to-day includes not only “door-sitting” but also any form of obstruction, for example, obstructing a water-course. Fasting is not, therefore, a necessary concomitant of *dharmā*, though it is of “door-sitting,” *dvāropaveśanam*.

iṣṭha), poison, water, hanging (or jumping, or earth-clods, or stones, these three in Vasiṣṭha alone). Although only the first of these is of special interest, I may add that the Hindu records show that with the exception of the two last, all these forms of suicide were generally recognized. Both epics have the same formula¹ for a woman contemplating suicide :

viṣam agnīm jalam rajjum āsthāsye tava kāraṇāt

says Damayantī, 4, 4, and her cry of despair,

"Poison, fire, water, the rope, will I undergo for thy sake," is echoed in the Rāmāyaṇa, ii. 29. 21,

viṣam agnīm jalam vā 'ham āsthāsye mṛtyukāraṇāt

"Poison, fire, or water I will undergo for the sake of death;" while the latter epic adds "the rope" a little later, as if it were a customary mode of death : *sā tvam agnīm praviṣa vā .. rajjum baddhvā 'tha vā kaṇṭhe*, R. ii. 74. 33, "Such (an evil woman art thou) do thou enter fire or bind the rope about thy neck."

So in R. iii. 45. 36 ff.: "If I be deprived of Rāma, I will enter the Godāvarī, or noose myself, or abandon my body on a cliff, or drink sharp poison, (or) enter fire, but never will I touch another man after Rāma."²

These forms are for women. Death (murder?) by drowning occurs in the case of Kahodā, who being defeated in argument, *vāde*, was drowned, *apsu nimajjitaḥ*, by his opponent, M. iii. 132. 15, which I cite because it is possible that he drowned himself in despair. So Haṇsa and Īmbhaka drowned themselves in the Jumna for love of each other, M. ii. 14. 41 ff. The women, though more apt to burn themselves on the pyre of their husbands, commit suttee by drowning also. Their suttee by fire is amply illustrated in the following passages from both epics :

"A good woman, *sādhvī*, follows after her husband who has died before her," M. i. 74. 46.

¹ Without this form in M. xiv. 69. 9, *bhakṣayiṣye viṣam ghoram pravekṣye vā hutāṣanam*, "I will eat poison or enter fire."

² Here the scene is intensified as compared with the simple "I will enter fire" of G. 51. 29. Peculiar to B. l. c. is *ābandhiṣye* (sc. *rajjvā kaṇṭham*) without object. "Poison, hanging (here *udbandhana*), entering fire, fasting and sword," follow, as alternative forms. "Leaping from cliff-edges," R. v. 13. 33-34, is suggested as an appropriate means of death for a disconsolate hero and his wife and children.

“Thus speaking the queen mounted the fire-pile,” M. i. 125. 31.

“‘What suttee (good) woman deprived of her husband could live?’ Thus wailing the unhappy woman, true to her husband, entered the gleaming fire,” M. xii. 148. 9–10.

These cases are from the *Mahābhārata*, which, however, in its older parts fully recognizes the survival of widows, cases of suttee being mentioned only in the later added books. The *Rāmāyaṇa* does not make the wife follow the husband,¹ but it alludes to the practice in ii. 66. 12 :

*sā 'ham adyāi va 'diṣṭāntam gamisyāmi pativratā
idaṁ ṣarīram ālīngya pravekṣyāmi hutācanam.*

“Being true to my husband I will go to death to-day.

Embracing this body (of my husband) I will enter the fire.”

Also in v. 26. 7 : “Fie upon me un-Āryan, not suttee, *asatī*, since deprived of him I live even for a moment a life that is evil.” The former passage is much expanded in the Bengal version, and the fact that no suttee takes place makes it probable that it was a conventional lament inserted after the completion of the first poem, as may be the case also with the actual suttee recorded in the first book of the other epic.² The good widows at the end of this latter epic (also a late addition) perform suttee by drowning themselves in the Ganges, xv. 33. 21 (*pativratāḥ sādhyāḥ*). *Manu*, however, does not recognize any form of suttee.

But if these cases refer only to women, not less do men commit suicide as a sacred act. Thus as at Susa, Kalanos, B. C. 324, so in the *Rāmāyaṇa* iii. 5, the ascetic *Ṣarabhaṅga* ends his life by burning himself and goes to heaven, though the general epic

¹ *Sītā* enters fire to prove her purity, but this is at the command of her husband. As she is the heroine, she comes out unscathed, R. vi. 116. 27 ff.

² The *Rāmāyaṇa* (perhaps late) is not lacking in passages which give the suttee sentiment. In a *prakṣipta*, *Sugrīva*'s wife *Rumā* will die when he dies, and *Tarā* also will perish through sorrow for her husband, R. v. 13. 27 ; while *Sītā* says “better to die than live deprived of *Rāma*,” ib. 26. 41, *ṣreyo me jīvitān martum vihinā yā mahātmanā*. Cf. ib. 25, 26, 34. Another *prakṣipta* (apparently), viz. v. 28, makes *Sītā*, after saying that poison and weapons are lacking, prepare to hang herself with this remark : *udbaddhya veṅyudgrathanena cighram aham gamiṣyāmi Yamasya mūlam* (17). These, however, are merely sentimental outbursts, and *Rāvaṇa* uses the same speech when his brother is slain, *nanu me maraṇam ṣreyāḥ*, etc., vi. 68. 18 ; while *Rāma* in turn is supposed to die of grief for *Sītā*, v. 26. 36.

rule is that "a man who kills himself, *ātmahā pumān*, does not go to heaven," i. 179. 20.¹ But even the law-book which regards suicides as accursed provides that ascetics may end their lives by starvation, Manu vi. 31. Such contradictions are common in law and epic. They spring sometimes from the antithesis of code and usage, sometimes from the inculcation of a higher ideal, as when austerity is usually said to be a sign of saintly life, but at the same time we are informed that "one who injures his body is not devout," *ātmatantropaghātī yo na tapasvī na dharmavit*, M. xiii. 93. 4. We need not be surprised, therefore, to learn that, though one who commits suicide by *prāya* is formally "accursed," this practice is approved in law and practiced by epic characters.

SUICIDE BY STARVATION.

So we approach that peculiar kind of suicide which forms the subject of this paper, according to which the creditor sets out to starve himself to death to compel payment.

But before speaking of this in detail it will be well to illustrate the fact that the formal exitus, *prāya*, is by no means confined to such legal use, but it is of far wider application. As I wish to distinguish the different forms of *prāya*, or death by starvation, I shall call the most general the first form. The verbs with which this word *prāya* is construed are usually *ās*, *upa-ās*, 'sit,' *gam* or *ā-gam*, *upa-i* or (*prati-*) *upa-viç*, 'enter upon,' the meaning being 'sit to death,' or 'enter upon death' (by sitting without nourishment); while *upa-viç* alone means 'fast upon.'

1. *Prāya* is suicide by starvation, undertaken without intent to harm and because of sorrow, or despair.

To this category belong the cases where heroes overcome in battle and no longer able to fight devote themselves to death to gain heaven. As this is considered a religious exercise, so it is in reality identical with the completion of philosophic Yoga, and is indeed called by the same name. The great saint sits in Yoga abstraction renouncing food till he dies, his object being merely to attain salvation. This is exactly what the warrior does in the following cases, where the soldier is at the same time more or less of a sainted character (*guru*):

¹ The female ascetic Çabarī also "burns herself (alive) and goes to heaven," in R. iii. 74. 32-33 (*hutvā 'tmānah hutāçane*).

In M. vii. 198. 29–31, Bhūriçravas sits silent, *muniḥ*, on the field of battle, having ‘entered upon *prāya*,’ *prāyagataḥ*, devoting himself to death. In this state he “withdraws his breath” and meditates upon holy texts, fixing his eye upon the sun, desirous of going to the Brahma-world. In other words he acts just like a Yogin, and the terms used of his act are indifferently *yogayuktaḥ* (*abhavan muniḥ*) and *prāyagataḥ* or *prāyam upāviṣat* (above and ib. 143. 33–35).

So in vii. 192. 46, Yoga is used of another hero who dies in the same way, sitting in his chariot, distressed because of his son’s reported death. This man too is said to be *prāyagataḥ* as well as *yogam īyivān*, “entered *prāya*” or “entered *yoga*,” vi. 43. 65–66. It is rather characteristic of the late seventh book that nowhere in the earlier epic is such an action called entering Yoga, and undoubtedly it was at first merely starvation or dying, without the element of mysticism given by the abstraction and prayerful attitude of the saint.

The same cause, slightly modified by failure, the sense of duty unfulfilled, and the fear of a worse death, leads the warriors in R. iv. 57. 18, to say “through fear we sit to death,” *bhayāt prāyam upāsītāḥ*.¹ The cause of *prāya* is given in R. iv. 55. 11, as the fear of imprisonment, “than which *prāyopaveṣana* is better,” and in iv. 53. 12–13, in other words: “We must die now, for we have failed in our attempt (and fear to go back to the king), and hence to enter upon death, *prāyapaveṣana*, is proper for us,” for “we have not accomplished what we ought.”²

It is clear that such cases of *prāya* or death by starvation involve no legal point and are only by accident, so to speak, cases of *prāya*. That is to say it would make no difference whether the characters here chose *prāya* or any other of the modes of suicide mentioned above. Their action is merely on a par with that of suicides by burning or drowning, which indeed are presented as normal alternatives. Thus in R. v. 13. 38 ff.: “If I

¹ In the corresponding account at G. iv. 56. 24 and 57. 23, the simple verb is used, *prāyam āsyate. āsmahe*. The *résumé* in R. v. 35. 60 has *prāyam upāsmahe* and *prāyopaviṣtāḥ*, with *prāyopaveṣa* (sic) in 62.

² *na kṛtaḥ kāryam*, R. iv. 56. 8. At the end of R. iv. 55. 17 and 20, in preparing for this ceremony those intending to die touch water and lie on holy *darbha* grass (the ends of the grass pointed south), with their faces to the east. The verb here is *upa-viṣ* (and *sam-upa-viṣ*).

fail in my attempt, I will become a hermit, or raising a pyre enter the fire, or birds and jackals may eat my body *after I have died of starvation in the proper way*,¹ or, for this too is a means of death recognized by the seers, I will drown myself." And so Prince Duryodhana says: "If I see these (rivals) here again I will dry myself up without water, without opposition (?); poison, hanging, the sword, entrance into fire, will I inflict upon myself, for I cannot see them successful again," M. iii. 7. 5.²

Between this general form of suicide by *prāya* and that to be mentioned next there is one which differs merely in respect of the cause assigned. As it is rather interesting, however, to see how the different cases lead up to the suicide with deadly motive (which is the legal form), I will separate the closely allied examples that follow.

2. *Prāya* is suicide by starvation, undertaken without intent to harm, but because of disgrace inflicted.

That is here accomplished which in the "death for sorrow" and "death because of fear" in the last paragraph was anticipated. It is perhaps scarcely worth while to differentiate these cases, but they are one step nearer to the legal *prāya*, in that the cases under 1 are merely the result of sorrow or fear, while in both this and the legal case an insult or injury has actually been inflicted. The suicide is not only unhappy; his honor has been affected.

Under this head comes the second threat (not fully carried out) of the same prince, Duryodhana, mentioned above, who in the *Mahābhārata* iii. 249. 11, 20 ff., says that he has been dishonored and will "sit to death" *prāyam upāsiṣye*. He then touches water, sits down upon *darbha*, sacrificial grass, and clothed in rags, and silent, collecting his thoughts, prepares to die of starvation; though his friends attempt to dissuade him by telling him

¹ čl. 40, *upaviṣṭasya vā samyak*, without *prāyam*, showing a purely technical use of *upa-viṣ* as in the law-books and in the verse cited above from the other epic. The alternate text, 15. 56, has *praviṣṭasya* (still of the pyre).

² *punaḥ ṣoṣaṁ gamiṣyāmi nīrambur nīravagrahaḥ, viṣam udbandhanaṁ caiva castram agnīpraveṇanam kariṣye*. The commentator gives a var. lec. *vāraṇo vā navagrahaḥ* (*vā* as often for *iva*). Compare with this scene, ii. 47. 31; also 52. 41. With the varied reading the verse means "I will dry myself up (starve myself) like an elephant newly caught," a familiar image of grief, e. g. in R. ii. 58. 3.

that he is foolish and that "a suicide goes to hell," (251. 19; 252. 2, *kasmāt prāyopaveṣanam ātmatyāgī hy adhoyāti*).¹

It may, however, be thought that there is in this case an ulterior though hidden object of revenge (the legal notion) in the act of *prāya*, affecting those who had disgraced the would-be suicide. Nothing of the sort appears in the tale, and that this is not a necessary concomitant may be seen on comparing the case in the tale of the tiger and the jackal. The jackal is minister to his king the tiger, and has been disgraced without reason. Although the king discovers the mistake and wishes to reinstate the minister, the latter feels the disgrace so keenly that he persists in his design, "begs to sit to death, being grieved by the anger" (of the king), and "having sat to death, went to heaven."² Here it is clear that if the minister's intent was to harm the king he would not first have asked permission of his intended victim.³

3. *Prāya* is undertaken as a self-inflicted punishment by one conscious of having sinned. Remorse instigates the act, but there is an additional notion that death will be an expiation. I have but one illustration, which shows that fear of punishment hereafter is the motive. In M. xii. 27. 23 ff., a king says: "Sinner that I am, *āgaskaraḥ pāpaḥ*, I will sit, *āṣinaḥ*, here and dry up my body. Know that I have now entered death (*prāya-upaviṣṭaḥ*) in order that I may not be born in other births, a destroyer of family. I will not eat, I will not take water, I will stay here and dry up my dear life."⁴ In the next example we come nearer to the legal aspect of the case, when suicide has an immediate motive, but still without intent to harm.

4. *Prāya* is undertaken from despair without intent to harm, but with intent to compel another to do one's will.

¹ The first reason given is that as the cause is insufficient he makes himself ridiculous: 250. 12, *prāyopaviṣṭas tu nṛpa rājñām hāsyo bhaviṣyasi*. In 249. 41, *upā-sthā* is used, *tvayi prāyam upāsthite*. Compare *prāyam upāsmāhe*, G. v. 32. 23.

² In regard to the spiritual reward, it is declared in M. xiii. 7. 16, that a *prāyopaveṣin* "always obtains bliss," *prāyopaveṣīno rājan sarvatra sukhān ucyate*, "just as one who lives on grass alone goes to heaven," said here of ascetic devotion.

³ The text is found in M. xii. 111. 73 and 90: *tenāmarṣeṇa saṁtaptāḥ prāyam āsitum āicchata* and *gomāyukḥ prāyam āsthāya tyaktvā dehaṁ divaṁ yayāu*.

⁴ *jātiṣv anyāśv api yathā na bhaveyaṁ kulāntakṛt, ṣoṣayiṣye priyān prāñān ihaṣtho 'ham*.

Illustrations are furnished at the close of the great epic war. Drāupadī thus devotes herself to death in despair and sorrow for the sake of urging her various husbands to do an act equivalent to taking a reprisal. The epic alludes to this in advance as "fasting upon her husbands," literally "besieging her husbands," where it is perhaps implied that if they suffer the queen to die they will reap the usual consequences. She continues in this state, *prāyopeta*, x. 16. 22, till the deed that she demands shall be done is actually accomplished. In entering into the *prāya* state she uses the formula

ihāi 'va prāyam āsisye, x. 11. 15,

"Here will I sit to death," which I call a formula because it is employed in the same words elsewhere in this epic and also in the Rāmāyaṇa, iv. 53. 19. Here is to be noticed the fact that in the preliminary in the Mahābhārata the word *prāya* is not used, but *upa-viṣ*, the verb (sitting against or besieging), governs the accusative in the technical sense of fasting upon (compare *upa-viṣṭa* as used above). This reference occurs in i. 2. 304, *kṛtāna-ṣanasamkalpā yatra bhartṛn upāviṣat*, "what time she, resolved upon not eating, besieged her husbands."¹

A similar case occurs in xiv. 80. 17 and 40-41, where the queen betakes herself to *prāya* with the intent to persuade a favor which shall relieve her of her grief. She is accompanied in her devotion by one of her sons, who seems to "sit to death" merely through grief and despair. The queen says: "Here will I sit to death in your presence, overwhelmed with woe at being deprived of husband and a son" (unless you restore them to life). She uses the words given above, *ihāi 'va prāyam āsisye*, and then "sitting down became silent," *upāsīnā tūṣṇīm āsit*, which may perhaps be translated better in the technical sense "besieging became silent." Her son "touches water and becomes silent," when *prāyopetaḥ*, or *prāyopaviṣṭaḥ*, that is "when entering upon *prāya*." No threat of harm is here made, but, as above, may be implied. It is assumed in both these cases that it is perfectly natural for a woman thus to enter *prāya*, and it is in fact the same situation as that described in the Rāmāyaṇa, iii. 47.

¹ In xii. 116. 10, *upaviṣṭa* is used of a saint not in *prāya* but simply fasting. The same word is current also in its literal sense of 'taking a seat' without any such connotation.

8-9, where the queen says: "If Rāma is consecrated (against my will and thy promise) I shall not eat, nor sleep, nor drink, from this day on forever, and this will be the end of my life." In R. ii. 11. 21 (compare 9. 59 ff.) this is represented as being a threat of death because of the disgrace attaching to the queen if her husband breaks his promise to her: "despised by thee, I will die to-day"; ib. 12. 47, "I will drink poison in thy presence."

There is of course no hard and fast line between these divisions. The sum of them is that an aggrieved or wretched or guilt-conscious person, whether man or woman, threatens to commit suicide by *prāya* as by other means with the intent to force another to do a certain thing, or, more rarely, simply to escape greater ill or atone for his sin. The former case brings us nearest to the legal aspect, where *prāya* is a means of compulsion.

This kind of *prāya* is found also in Buddhistic narratives. Thus Tissa and Raṭṭhapāla both abstain from food to get what they want, as narrated in the Vāta-miga Jātaka and Raṭṭhapāla Sutta. But on this side I lack fuller information, the illustration in this paper being drawn chiefly from the epics, where I believe they are complete.

5. *Prāya* is undertaken by a suppliant, but it is accompanied with a threat to the effect that if the object of desire is not granted vengeance will be taken. The motive here is to excite pity, which failing, recourse is had to force.

This is illustrated by Rāma lying on sacred grass in *prāya*, but at the same time threatening the (god of) ocean, which in the Mahābhārata version is sufficient, but in the Rāmāyaṇa the threat is carried out with an absurd account of an attack on Ocean.¹ Here it is to be observed that the suppliant is not a priest but a warrior. The threat, however, and actual attack on the ocean-god is an epic (heroic) equivalent of the restraint which goes with the 'door-sitting.'

6. *Prāya* is undertaken by a suppliant, but is accompanied with the threat that if the object of desire be denied the one who rejects the suppliant will go to hell.

This is quite in accord with the view of the law-books, where the implication is clearly that the person who permits the suicide

¹ M. iii. 283. 30 ff., *pratiṣṣyāmy upavaśan .. upaspr̥ṣya pratiṣṣye jalanidhiṃ vidhivat kuṣaśaṃstare*; R., vi. 19. 41 *kuṣāstīrṇe saṃviveṣa .. 21. 1, pratiṣṣye.*

to be carried out will suffer for it hereafter. As said above, this threat may be implied in some of the preceding cases, though there is only one explicit example of this sort known to me in epic poetry. But here too it is not a priest who threatens.

In Rāmāyaṇa ii. 21. 27–28, the queen says to her son: “If thou abandonest me, my son, I will sit to death, being unable to live, and then thou shalt go to the hell world-renowned” (known to be in store for such as slay by refusing to grant requests in such circumstances).¹

7. *Prāya*, further (but here the word is only implied), is undertaken at the door of the house, the suppliant sitting on sacred *kuṣa*-grass, with intent to compel submission, as in the law-books. But no violence is used, and there is no suggestion that the one affected will suffer hereafter. It is expressly said that this recourse is fitting only for a priest, and the situation is likened to that caused by a “priest robbed of his money.” The only example is in R. ii. 111. 14–17, where Rāma’s brother attempts to persuade him to return home, and to do so strews *kuṣa*-grass before the door of the hut, takes up his position there, and says:

“I will besiege (beseech) the prince until he grants me his favor.

“Without food, not averting my eyes, like a priest that has been robbed of his possessions,

“I will lie before his hut until he (yields or) returns home.”

To which the prince replies: “Why wilt thou besiege me? For only a Brahman (priest) has a right to obstruct men, and the observance in regard to besieging is not for annointed (kings).”²

¹ *aham prāyam ihā ’siṣye .. tatas tvam prāpśyase putra nirayam loka-viçrutam brahmahatyām ivā ’dharmāt samudraḥ saritām patih.* The last words refer to some Puranic legend (according to the commentator) which narrates that Ocean was once cursed by Pippalāda because of impiety to his mother. Ocean is cursed in M. xiii. 154. 7: “Once Ocean was cursed by the Brahmans and though at that time full of fresh water, became salty.” The reference in the text cited, however, would imply that Ocean was cursed to suffer the penalty of killing a priest, though the Commentator says “he received grief equivalent to the punishment of going to hell.” The alternate text, G. ii. 18. 31, has *brahmaçāpam ivā ’kasmāt*, “received suddenly the Brahman curse.”

² *āryam pratyupavekṣyāmi yāvan me (v. l. na for sam) samprasīdati, nīrāhāro nīrāloko dhanahīno yathā dvijaḥ, çaye purastāc chālāyāṁ yāvan mām (v. l. na) pratiyāsyati: kim mām ... pratyupavekṣyase,*

So far as I know this is the only case where the verb “obstruct,” *rodhati* in technical application, occurs in epic accounts (the legal *grha-saṁrodha*), though it is interesting to see that *saṁrodha* is in ordinary epic parlance applied to obstruction of food, *āhārasaṁrodha*, R. iv. 59. 11.

These examples show that the full practice of the law in respect of *dharmā* was recognized. The one who rejects a suppliant and compels him to kill himself, goes to hell. The only one who has a right to exercise constraint of this sort is a priest. Clearly then the practice of door-besieging is a restriction for a special cause of, a practice once recognized as universal, suicide with especial intent to compel the victim of the practice to yield under pain of future punishment after death, which in turn is but one application of the still more general practice of suicide without intent to harm in cases of despair and disgrace.

Both of these practices survive in India, under the respective names of *traga*, that is suicide simply as a self-inflicted punishment for disgrace or failure to carry out what has been solemnly agreed to, and *dharmā* (= *dharmā*), literally a holding, capio, or in English slang a “hold up,” which is restricted to a priest, and as already stated may be any form of obstruction, like obstructing the door or obstructing a water-course. These two are sometimes merged, as in the case which I reported in my *Religions of India*, p. 480, as occurring the year this book was written, 1894. The man who had made himself responsible for a payment, on finding that the debtor would not pay, to expiate the disgrace slew his own mother in the presence of the defaulter, who in turn as his only expiation slew himself. On page 361 of the same work I have expressed a doubt as to whether the “door-sitting” was a very ancient practice. I presume I meant recognized in ancient tales as well as law, an observation which I herewith beg leave to cancel.

In modern times, as has been noticed by Professor Jolly in his excellent manual on Hindu Law and Custom, a looser form of *dharmā*, known in South India as *takāzā*, permits the creditor to institute by proxy a regular siege of the debtor’s house. Here

brāhmaṇo hy ekapārṣvena narān roddhum ihā ’rhati (v. l. *ṣayānas tu puram dahet*!), *na tu mūrdhābhiṣiktānām vidhiḥ pratyupavechane*. As to the v. l. with the unnecessary *na* in G. after *yāvat*, the similar formula in G. ii. 8. 58 (corresponding to 9. 59, above) has *nā ’lamkāraṇa na bhojanam āśveṣye hy aham tāvad yāvad Rāmo vanaṁ vrajet*.

the creditor, instead of acting for himself, hires a band of ruffians to obstruct, besiege, annoy, and threaten the life of the debtor. Some premonition of this substitution is found in the interpretation by a mediæval commentary of Nārada's law—which, i. 122, on this subject coincides with Manu's law—whereby a son or slave may act for the creditor. The Southern *takāzā* is of course without any religious significance, for the debtor is simply bulldozed into paying. Professor Pischel has noticed, moreover, one other interesting phase of moral compulsion as a means of recovering debts, namely the 'charmed circle,' which in dramatic literature is drawn about a man who will not pay his gambling debts and out of which he may not step till he has settled (cited by Jolly, *Recht und Sitte*, p. 148).

As to the ancient practice, the universal use of *prāya* in the technical sense exemplified above and the restricted observance of "door-sitting" removes all doubt as to Bṛhaspati's rule. Any one may sit in *prāya* as a means of compulsion; the *ācarita* is a special case appertaining to a priest who alone may obstruct, to kill whom is peculiarly heinous even by letting him starve, while his immunity from active murder (which was out of the question) gave him safety when engaged in distraint of cattle, etc. The one 'obstructed' was of course himself obliged to starve with the starving creditor, so that the practice, as far as fasting went, resolved itself into a sort of stomach-duel. The restriction to a priest must have been in the minds of the legal writers, as it is expressed as a matter of course in the epic.

It is interesting to find in the epic the explicit statement (lacking in the early law-books) that door-sitting was not permitted against "consecrated kings," whereas, according to the ancient laws of Ireland, quoted by Maine, *op. cit.* p. 280, the creditor might distrain without fasting in the case of a debtor "not of chieftain grade," but in the case of a chieftain it was necessary to "fast upon him."

Finally, to these oldest literary illustrations of the law I will add the oldest reference to the practice known to me in Hindu literature. Since the custom of constraining by suicide appears to be even Indo-European, it may indeed seem unimportant to track it back as far as possible in Hindu literature. Yet, since, on the other hand, there is always a lurking doubt as to whether a custom which is found among several related peoples be not self-developed in each rather than inherited by all, it may not be

unprofitable to note a trace of this sort of fasting in Vedic literature that is considerably older than either law or epic. Such a trace is to be found in the Kāuṣītaki Upanishad of the Rig Veda, one of the five oldest philosophical dialogues that we possess (circa 700-600 B. C.). Here, as a simile in a metaphysical discussion, is introduced a case: "As if one, after begging a village and getting nothing, should fast (on the village) saying 'I would not eat now even if (the village) should give,' and then those same (villagers) who previously should repulse him come and urge him saying 'Permit us to give to thee.'" It is even possible to translate the first clause "after begging and getting nothing, should fast on the village."¹

The reason for the suddenly insistent generosity pictured here can be only that the villagers fear that the beggar will starve himself to death out of revenge, and that they will suffer the usual consequences of the *prāyopaveṣana*. This takes the custom back to at least the close of the Vedic period in India, a date earlier by several centuries, I think, than that of any allusion to the practice previously noticed.²

¹ The word used is the same as in the expression I have cited above from the epic (*bhartṛn upāviṣat*). It is not material, however, whether we translate "fasts on the village" or "after begging a village should sit down (in *prāya*) saying 'I would not eat,'" since the following words and the result of the act show that *prāyopaveṣana* is intended. The text is: *yathā grāmam bhikṣitvā 'labdhvo 'paviṣen nā 'ham ato dattam aṇṇīyam ili ya evāi 'nam purastāt pratyācakṣiraṇs ta evāi 'nam upa-mantrayante dadāma ta iti*, Kāuṣ. ii. 1.

² So far as I have been able to ascertain, the practice of door-sitting to obtain payment of a debt is not found in China, but starvation to compel one to grant a desire is practiced there, and suicide (by knife) on the doorstep, either with the same purpose or to insure a curse upon the householder, is not infrequent. Under cases of Suicide in General, I have neglected above to give any early examples of suicide by leaping from a cliff, but this was always a favorite mode of dying (for love, as early as Rig Veda, X. 95. 14).